



## Urban Justice Center

123 William Street, 16th floor, New York, NY 10038  
Tel: (646) 602-5600 • Fax: (212) 533-4598  
www.urbanjustice.org

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February 6, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Clinton  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20520  
Fax: 202-647-2283

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We, the undersigned organizations dedicated to fighting racial injustice and promoting human rights domestically and globally congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of State, and look forward to working with you in this new capacity. We are writing to request your assistance in engaging the United States government as a full participant in the Durban Review Conference scheduled for April 20-24, 2009.

The Durban Review Conference is currently an important forum for recommitting the global community to combating racism and racial discrimination as articulated in the 2001 World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) Declaration and Program of Action. As you know, the Bush administration withdrew from the WCAR in 2001, and declined to participate in the preparatory meetings leading up to the Durban Review Conference. We are aware that the Bush administration presented reasons for withdrawing from the WCAR in 2001, however those reasons are not related to the WCAR Declaration and Program of Action, which is the focus of the conference. Many of us sent a letter to former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on June 11, 2008 urging that the Bush administration engage in the preparatory process leading up to the Durban Review Conference. We received an informal response from the Department of State that the decision on whether to participate in the conference would be left to the next administration.

We commend the former administration for some of the steps it took towards fulfilling its obligations to combat racial discrimination including: the submission of its fourth, fifth, and sixth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in April 2007; the sending of a high-level delegation to the United States review by CERD in February 2008; the invitation to Mr. Doudou Diene, the Special Rapporteur on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerances, to conduct a fact-finding mission in the United States in May 2008; and the recent submission of a follow-up memo to



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CERD in January 2009. These are steps in the right direction however we believe that the Obama administration can and should do much more.

Notwithstanding the historic election of our first African American president, the United States continues to live with the historical legacy of racism and persistent problems of racial and ethnic discrimination. In this new day of optimism for a renewed commitment to human rights, it is imperative for the United States to take a leadership role in engaging with the global community to combat racism. Full participation in the remaining preparatory meetings for the Durban Review Conference as well as in the actual summit is an important step in fulfilling this mandate. There is still time for the United States to engage as a full and active member in the conference. The next formal preparatory sessions for the Durban Review Conference are scheduled to take place from April 6-10, 2009, and April 15-17, 2009. The Durban Review Conference is on April 20-24, 2009. We appreciate that the timing of the conference to take place early in the new administration call for immediate action and are confident that the Obama administration will make this a priority.

We must be vigilant in the fight to achieve racial justice and equality, and know that you share our commitment to fighting racial discrimination. We welcome the opportunity to meet with your office to discuss this important conference, and look forward to the active consultation with non-governmental groups by the Obama administration in advancing human rights. We are eager to discuss the government's plans on this matter and anticipate your response. If you have any questions, please contact Ejim Dike, Director of the Human Rights Project at the Urban Justice Center, [edike@urbanjustice.org](mailto:edike@urbanjustice.org) or 646-602-5628.

Sincerely,

### **Organizations**

- Amnesty International
- The Center for Community Alternatives
- Center for Community and Urban Health, Hunter College, City University of New York
- Center for Constitutional Rights
- The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)
- Cidadao Global
- Comite de Vivienda San Pedro / St. Peter's Housing Committee
- Concerned Citizens for Family Preservation
- CONNECT
- Filipinos for Affirmative Action
- 5 RIGHTS, INC.
- Foundations for Our New Alkebulan/Afrikan Millennium (FONAMI)
- Franciscans International (FI)
- Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition



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- Harlem Tenants Council, Inc.
- Human Rights Advocates
- International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
- May Day New Orleans
- MS Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA)
- National Conference of Black Lawyers
- National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI)
- National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
- National Lawyers Guild
- National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
- National Reparations Congress (USA)
- NY Solidarity Coalition with Katrina & Rita Survivors and the Survivors Assembly
- Norbertines of the Priory of St. Moses the Black
- PG-RNA, Provisional Government Republic of New Afrika: PCC, People's Center Council
- Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York (ROC-NY)
- September 7th Movement
- TIGRA- Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action
- Transgender, Gender Variant & Intersex Justice Project
- Urban Justice Center
- Willets Point Defense Committee
- Women's Institute for Leadership and Development (WILD) for Human Rights
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section

### **Individuals (Organizations/Affiliations for identification purposes only)**

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AFICS - Life Member since 6/27/95

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cc: Susan Rice, Ambassador to the United Nations  
Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Representative 9th Congressional District of California